

We are faculty, students, and staff at Temple University writing in support of Marc Lamont Hill's academic freedom to express his views on the Israeli occupation of Palestine. We thought his arguments were passionate, considered, and thoughtful, and that they respected the humanity of Palestinians and Israelis. Regardless of whether we agree or disagree with him, we support his freedom to espouse his views.

Temple University's contract with professors states that: "When [a professor] speaks or writes as a citizen, he/she should be free from institutional censorship or discipline; but...he/she should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that he/she is not speaking for the institution."

Professor Hill's speech at the United Nations meets this standard. We must note the irony that for all the outrage his speech elicited from some members of the Temple community, neither he nor the committee chair who introduced him ever mentioned Hill's affiliation with Temple University. Hill was clearly not presenting his views as representing those of Temple University nor would anyone construe them as such.

Patrick O'Connor, chair of Temple University's board of trustees, disagrees. He is quoted in the Philadelphia Inquirer, calling Hill's views "disgusting" and "hate speech", claiming that "no one at Temple is happy with [Hill's] comments". He tasked Temple administrators with looking into ways to discipline and perhaps even fire Marc Lamont Hill.

We respect O'Connor's right to express his own views on the Israeli occupation. But if anyone is guilty of violating Temple's clause on academic freedom, it is O'Connor. His comments were not restrained, he did not show respect for Hill's opinions, and he flagrantly misrepresented his views as those of everyone at Temple. Most egregiously, O'Connor undermined academic freedom by implying that firing Hill was desirable and/or in process. Academic freedom is a bedrock principle of academia. O'Connor has betrayed that principle and we have no confidence in his leadership of the board.

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